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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [KISL](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: THE NETHERLANDS: COMBATING EXTREMISM THROUGH ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

REF: A. STATE ...

IB. THE HAGUE 2599

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHAT BLAKEMAN FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

I1. (C) SUMMARY: The GONL is fully trying at the national and local levels to combat Islamic extremism on Dutch soil. The government's approach involves a two-pronged effort. First, the Dutch are promoting social integration in order to shrink the pool of potential recruits for extremist groups. Second, they are tackling extremists directly by reinforcing the government's ability to investigate and prosecute terrorism and to frustrate individuals and groups that promote violent radicalism. Most of these programs are new, so their long-term effectiveness is hard to judge; preliminary indications are mixed. Many official efforts to reach out to communities most susceptible to the extremist message have been received skeptically. Embassy The Hague and AMCONSULATE Amsterdam are actively cultivating ties with the Dutch Muslim community, and have recently established a Working Group on Integration Issues to coordinate outreach and reporting opportunities among all mission elements. END SUMMARY

II. HOST COUNTRY EFFORTS:

NATIONAL LEVEL:

I2. (C) Although the September 11 attacks in the U.S. and the Madrid bombings convinced the Dutch government to reexamine its counterterrorism policies (septel), the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Dutch-born Islamic Extremist in November 2004 was an equally traumatic wake-up call. The van Gogh murder, and the subsequent arrest of members of the Hofstad Group, was viewed by many as proof that long-standing Dutch approaches were inadequate to counter extremism within the Netherlands growing and largely non-integrated Muslim community (ref b). Minister of Integration Rita Verdonk was given primary responsibility for combat radicalism nationally, along with a 40 million Euro budget for this purpose. On August 19, 2005 Verdonk unveiled a comprehensive program entitled Empowerment and Integration Policy, Prevention of Radicalization from the Perspective of Integration Policy. The plan includes 34 projects and initiatives for implementation over the next 3 years, and tasks individual ministries with carrying out specific parts of the plan. The programs are designed to counter radicalism from Muslim extremists as well as right-wing extremists and others espousing violent ideologies.

PRONG ONE: EMPHASIZING INTEGRATION

I3. (C) The first prong of the government's comprehensive approach is to reduce the appeal of radical ideologies, especially among youth, by promoting the concept of shared citizenship, strengthening social ties between native and non-native Dutch, and encouraging vulnerable youth to remain in school. To this end, the Education Inspection Board was tasked with establishing a national center to report incidents of discrimination and extremism in the education sector. The GONL has also begun partnering with government-funded think tanks to empower youth and imbue them with democratic norms, strengthen social ties between minorities and native Dutch, and empowering Muslim circles against the influence of radicalization. Specific areas in which the GONL has become or intends to become more active nationally include;

- Mentoring and coaching for teachers and students.
- Promotion of active citizenship
- Support of civil initiatives in the areas of the labor market, economic entrepreneurship, education, youth, sports, and neighborhood safety.
- Measures and initiatives to remove impediments for minorities on the labor market through creation of more training and work experience placements, countering prejudice and coaching higher-educated minority youth

14. (C) The 34 specific projects listed projects fall into the following categories:

-- Shared Citizenship within Democratic Rule of Law: These include education projects to promote awareness of a shared past, present and future between Muslim communities and native Dutch, as well as programs to highlight the social benefits of ethnic diversity. Promoting the celebration of Day of Freedom World War II remembrance day is also a priority. The program envisages a series of lectures and conferences on fundamentalism and radicalization, and promotes contracts and covenants between local authorities, schools, Islamic organizations and mosques on moral frameworks and code of conduct.

-- Local Approaches to Enhance Empowerment and Social Ties: The GONL will sponsor a conference of the 30 largest towns and minority organizations this fall to coordinate activities. The GONL plans to develop and maintain a diverse group of contacts within communities for consultations, and to improve the expertise of government officials and other professionals (teachers, police, etc.) working within Muslim communities.

-- Involving Youth and Parents: The program establishes a summer school program for 20 at-risk college students to discuss issues such as free speech and rule of law. Personal coaching for leadership for high potential leaders within communities to act as role models will also be provided. Youth leaders will receive training in engaging in and leading debate and spokesmen for their communities, and in promoting intergenerational debate between Muslim youth and their elders. Refugee youth, who are particularly vulnerable to radicalization, have been targeted for engagement in debates on social ties and radicalization.

-- Emancipation of Girls and Women: Active attempts to engage women in public and private debate on issues related to religion are envisaged.

-- Involving the Muslim Community: The government is reaching out to the Muslim community to counter the impression that Muslim youth are not fully accepted members of Dutch society, and is seeking support from Muslim community leaders in explaining that that Dutch society offers opportunities to those who persevere, that Islam has a place in Dutch society, and that Muslims have much freedom to practice their religion here. Attempts to explain political Islam to the Muslim community youth are also underway, including government efforts to provide alternative perspective through popular Dutch-Moroccan websites. The GONL has also proposed funding programs to train imams in the Netherlands, thus reducing the need to import potentially radical imams from abroad and increasing the links between the religious leadership and Dutch society. Supplemental training for Koran teachers and to youth workers in the various ethnic communities will be provided, and the GONL will sponsor messages aimed at improving the profile of Islam in the Netherlands.

-- Involving the native Dutch Population: The program proposes establishing an Integration Council consisting of both minority and majority representatives, instead of the exclusive minority representation currently in place. The government is also encouraging dialogue between Muslim communities and media outlets and opinion-makers. In the next few months, there will be a national bus tour entitled Netherlands New Land providing information and a platform for debate to each of the communities it visits.

PRONG TWO: COUNTERING RADICALIZATION

15. (C) In addition to adopting tougher counterterrorism and immigration measures (septels), the GONL is focusing on increasing awareness of the dangers of radical Islam, particularly among vulnerable populations, and on increasing the ability of individuals to counter the appeal of extremist groups. The GONL's plan notes that defending oneself against radicalization requires specific knowledge and skills, including knowing how to live with Islam in a secular and Western society and respect for the democratic legal order.

16. (C) The GONL has announced the creation of neighborhood social network groups comprised of influential community members whom educators, police or parents can contact at the first signs of radicalization. This group will also have non-advertised contact with the Dutch government and security services, but will serve as a first line of defense within the community against radicalization.

17. (C) The national government has also commissioned a study, to be completed by year's end, on the causes of radicalization and effective strategies for countering it. The National Counter Terrorism Board (NCTB) has also begun to monitor radical websites active in the Netherlands and is carrying out notice and take down procedures.

LOCAL EFFORTS:

18. (C) Since the populations considered most vulnerable to radicalization are concentrated in urban areas, many of the most active counter-extremism programs have developed at the local level. The quasi-governmental Netherlands Institute for Safety and Crisis Management (COT) has developed anti-radicalization programs for the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, including guidance for local authorities on early-warning signs of radicalization. The programs are fairly comprehensive and include measures to combat discrimination, promote integration, and foster positive school environments on the neighborhood level. Another aspect of the program is the creation of a central information house or clearinghouse that collects information on groups within the Muslim community from various local government agencies (i.e. welfare, tax, passport, etc.) The information house has some tangential contact with law enforcement, but seeks to avoid overt ties because of political sensitivities. Project coordinators originally envisaged creating a database to manage information on a citywide basis, but legal restrictions including strict privacy laws have stymied progress. The information house will analyze information and look for trends and indicators that reveal radicalization among youths.

19. (C) Another aspect of the plans is an early-warning radicalization indicator checklist. The list, which is being compiled by local law enforcement officials with support from the intelligence services, draws from input provided by social scientists, teachers, community leaders, and others living and working directly with vulnerable populations. Some indicators on the list include: relatively sudden change in appearance or activity; sudden interest in religion; increasingly homophobic or bigoted displays of discrimination; increasing isolation, disaffection or absences, following of a radical figure or participation in independent religious groups, decreasing respect for women and authorities, perception of Western society as the enemy, and decreasing involvement in crime. The list is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, but rather a tool for local law enforcement officials and others to help identify potentially extremist individuals and groups early in the radicalization process.

110. (C) In addition to these new plans, municipalities with sizable at-risk populations already have the City of Amsterdam has \$61 million euros for integration and anti-radicalization efforts, some of which comes from EU funds and the rest from city revenues. One program implemented by the city is And Now Something Positive, which provides a trip to Morocco for 20 Dutch-Moroccan at-risk youth for three weeks to complete service programs. Many of these programs are long-standing; for example, Mohammed Bouyeri, the convicted murderer of filmmaker Theo van Gogh, grew up in an Amsterdam neighborhood that has numerous community-based initiatives. One of them is an award winning crime prevention scheme entitled Neighborhood Fathers. The group, a neighborhood watch program to inform authorities of illegal and extremist activity, was established in 1999 after riots erupted between Moroccan youth and local police.

NGOs

111. (C) The government has engaged NGOs and quasi-governmental organizations in developing and implementing some of the anti-radicalization strategies. In September, three Dutch mosques in Amsterdam drafted a code of conduct in cooperation with local authorities to help fight radicalism, promote democratic values and encourage imams to speak Dutch in return for stronger action on discrimination against Muslims. Also, a private Dutch foundation that provides consulting advice to small businesses has recently implemented a project to provide such marketing, financial, and legal services to immigrant entrepreneurs in ethnic communities.

EFFECTIVENESS OF DUTCH PROGRAMS:

112. (C) The comprehensive national anti-radicalization plan is still in the early stages of being implemented, so its real impact cannot be judged at this time. There is no question that relations between Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the Netherlands is a politically volatile issue, and there is broad agreement that engaging the Muslim community to reduce radicalization should be a high priority of the government at all levels. On the other hand, Minister Verdonk -- who is personally identified with controversial proposals to reduce Muslim immigration and to remove radical imams from the Netherlands -- is extremely unpopular among the Dutch Muslim population. The fact that

her ministry is developing and championing the latest government outreach programs is, therefore, cause for skepticism. Although Verdonk's ministry has sought the input of Muslim organizations in developing its ideas, a contact in her recently confided that overcoming the doubts of the Muslim community regarding the government's intentions will be a major challenge.

¶13. (C) The government recognizes that existing integration and community policing efforts at the local level have more credibility and better chances of success than a new national initiatives. For this reason, many of the proposals in Verdonk's plan are intended to reinforce and strengthen local efforts. For example, the plan envisions establishing a national center acting as extremist hotline/call center to provide support to local community officials. A community policeman from Amsterdam recently told post that having access to such a center might have helped local police deal with Mohammed Bouyeri (Theo van Gogh's murderer) before he turned to violence. The policeman, who knew Bouyeri personally from this former involvement in community activities, had been arrested one month prior to the murder for riding a metro train without a ticket. The policeman observed that Bouyeri had drastically changed his appearance -- growing longer hair and a full beard -- and refused to shake hands with his former, non-Muslim, friends. The community policeman notified the police intelligence unit about his concerns, but there was no mechanism in place to effectively deal with Bouyeri's dramatic evolution and danger signs.

II. U.S. MISSION OUTREACH

GENERAL APPROACH

¶14. (C) Embassy The Hague and the Amsterdam Consulate are actively broadening their existing networks of Muslim contacts, NGO's, and other organizations dealing with Muslim youth. In this regard, the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) has been especially effective tool. Upon their return from the U.S., Muslim participants in this program have helped broaden the Mission's circle of contacts by helping to set up joint events and other outreach activities. Each year since 2001, an increasing portion of the Mission's IVLP slate has been filled by Dutch Muslims, a trend the mission fully intends to continue (see below). The Mission Program Plan (MPP) will be modified this year to reflect the higher priority given to expanding Mission contacts with and understanding of the Dutch Muslim community.

SPECIFIC STEPS:

MISSION-WIDE

¶15. (C) To better coordinate its outreach and reporting activities related to countering extremism, the Mission established an Integration Issues Working Group in August, 2005 to bring together all relevant Embassy elements. The group is chaired by the Political Counselor and includes representatives from ECON, PA, GLO, RSO, FCS, LEGATT, AMCONSULATE Amsterdam, and other Mission elements. The Charge D'Affaires actively follows and participates in the activities of the Working Group, which meets every two weeks, to review Mission activities in this area and to develop future plans. Among the projects initiated specifically by the Group to improve the sharing of information are:

- A mission-wide data base of contacts in the Dutch Muslim community and others involved in integration/counter-radicalization efforts;
- A calendar of upcoming Muslim- or extremism-related events;
- An archive of public and mission-produced documents related to counter-extremism in the Netherlands.
- Detailed reporting and outreach plans for each section.

¶16. (C) Since August the Working Group has developed a comprehensive engagement plan for Ramadan 2005, identified four new Muslim IV candidates, and conducted a series of round table discussions on integration and extremism with local contacts chaired by the Charge d'Affaires. The Country Team has adopted a policy of inviting at least one Dutch-Muslim contact to all Embassy receptions and events. During the upcoming Ramadan season, the Charge will host (for the first time) an Iftar dinner at his residence, and will also invite Ambassadors and Consuls from predominantly Muslim countries to a separate event. Embassy participants will attend Iftar dinners with Dutch Muslim families in conjunction with the country's first nationwide Ramadan Festival.

¶17. (C) During the current fiscal year, the Mission sent four Dutch Muslim IV grantees to the U.S. Two participated in a program on E-Commerce and the U.S. Economy and two in Managing Diversity in a Multi-Ethnic Society. Furthermore, the Embassy hosted 'Citizen Diplomat' Nassar Beydoun, Member of the Board of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce and President, Project Control Systems Inc. His program included meetings with the Dutch government, City of The Hague and City of Amsterdam officials, young ethnic entrepreneurs, Muslim students, and a dinner with former Muslim IVLP alumni. Last year the Ambassador, the PAO and PD staff attended two Iftar dinners in Amsterdam.

¶18. (C) In November, Dr. Gary Weaver, an International Affairs professor and immigration and multi-cultural expert at American University, will serve as a U.S. speaker on the topic, Immigrants, Identity and Integration in Multi-Cultural Democracies. The target audience are Muslim groups and Dutch officials who are engaged in integration initiatives. Public Affairs promoted Dutch involvement in the State Department's 9/28 web chat with Dr. Weaver on this topic. The Public Affairs section has also helped line up American speakers for the national Ramadan festival, such as Dr. Kamran Ali, a visiting American Fulbright Scholar at Leiden University, Dr. Jessica Stern of Harvard University, and Dr. Shabbir Mansuri, the Founding Director of the Council on Islamic Education (based in San Francisco). The section is also attempting to place op-ed pieces in community newspapers in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods.

¶19. (C) In consultation with Public Affairs section the Fulbright commission has greatly stepped up its outreach to Dutch Muslims. The commission hired a part-time Dutch Turkish immigrant who has helped the commission to increase the number of Dutch immigrant applicants for Fulbright study grants. For example, 27 Dutch immigrant applicants submitted applications before the 9/16/05 Early Application deadline out of 181 applicants.

¶20. (C) The Public Affairs section is also actively engaging media outlets to promote the counter-extremism agenda. For example, the Embassy sponsored a U.S. reporting tour for journalists from four Dutch cities with large Muslim populations focused on the immigration, integration, and assimilation experience in the U.S. The Section is also working to place op-ed style pieces in community newspapers in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods.

OTHER SECTIONS

¶21. (C) In coordination with the Working Group and Public Affairs, other Mission elements have actively stepped up their outreach to the Muslim community and other activities to reflect Mission priorities. These include:

-- Consulate General: Consulate staff have stepped up their already active outreach to Dutch Muslim community leaders in Amsterdam, including by visiting mosques and participating in mosque-sponsored events. The Consul General regularly attends meetings with local Muslim groups, has attended Iftar events. In September, 2005 she represented the USG at the opening of a new Islamic University in Rotterdam..

-- Political Section: POL requested and received in August a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) to focus exclusively on issues related to Dutch Muslim integration, radicalization, and extremism. Her efforts have already substantially enhanced the Section's contact base and reporting opportunities. The Political Section is also engaging with Dutch government and think-tank contacts on the possibility of organizing an Islamic Extremism conference in the Netherlands sometime in the coming year.

-- Global Issues: The Global Issues section has engaged the Ministries responsible for anti-radicalization programs, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has extensively researched local governments' anti-radicalization programs. The section is also preparing an IV visit for a policy officer at the National Counter Terrorism Board who works on anti-radicalization issues.

-- Foreign Commercial Service: FCS has intensified its engagement with minority business owners and community leaders. It is participating in the Black Woman Business Owners' Association, which includes Muslim women business leaders. FCS is also actively recruiting Dutch-Muslim students for its intern program.

-- Economic Section: ECON will cooperate with FCS in outreach activity, and is drafting a report detailing the socioeconomic realities of Muslims in the Netherlands.

